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Four short-range ballistic missiles are launched by North Korea



The South Korean military reported that **North Korea** launched four short-range ballistic missiles into the sea on Saturday, the latest in a barrage of weapon tests by Pyongyang this week. An intercontinental ballistic missile and one that touched down close to South Korea's territorial seas for the first time since the conclusion of the **Korean War in 1953** were among the several launches from North Korea.

The launches occurred in the midst of the largest-ever joint air force exercises between the US and South Korea, which North Korea, incensed, referred to as "aggressive and provocative." The South Korean military discovered four North Korean short-range ballistic missiles that were launched today between 11:32 and 11:59 am from Tonrim, North Pyongan Province, according to a statement from the Joint Chiefs of Staff of South Korea.

It went on to say that they were "detected at a flight distance of approximately 130 km (80 miles), an altitude of approximately 20 km, and a speed of approximately Mach 5". Mach 5 refers to a speed that is five times that of sound. Additional analysis of the launches was being conducted by US and South Korean intelligence, according to the JCS.

North Korea may conduct a nuclear test as a result of these launches, the United States and South Korea have warned, and as a result, their air force exercises have been postponed until Saturday. Initial plans called for the combined exercise, called Vigilant Storm, to take place from Monday through Friday.

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In response to the US-South Korea air drills, Pyongyang has increased the number of missile launches. North Korea has traditionally been enraged by such [exercises because](#) it perceives them as invasion drills.

“Important threat”

The **US Air Force** deployed two [B-1B long-range](#) heavy bombers on the penultimate day of Vigilant Storm in an increased display of force. Vigilant Storm ended on Saturday.

The deployment of US strategic weaponry, such as B-1B bombers and aircraft carrier strike groups, to and near the Korean peninsula at tense times has historically particularly incensed Pyongyang. The US Air Force refers to the supersonic B-1B as “the backbone of America’s long-range bomber force” despite the fact that it no longer [carries nuclear weapons](#).

The Lancer can carry up to 34 tons (75,000 pounds) of weaponry, including laser-guided bombs and cruise missiles, according to the USAF.

By refueling in-flight, the B-1B’s range can be increased, enabling it to carry out attacks anywhere in the world.

North Korea will view the B-1B’s participation in the drills with South Korea as a “major threat” given its role as a key strategic US asset, according to Ahn Chan-il, a scholar of North Korean studies, who spoke to AFP.

A day earlier, South Korea had scrambled fighter jets in response to what it claimed was the mobilization of 180 North Korean warplanes. The B-1B deployment followed that.

According to experts, Pyongyang is especially sensitive about these drills because its air force is one of its military’s weakest points and lacks modern jets and well-trained pilots.

Vigilant Storm has witnessed some of the most cutting-edge US and South Korean jets in action, including F-35 stealth fighters, in contrast to North Korea’s aging fleet.

On Friday at the UN Security Council, US Ambassador Linda [Thomas-Greenfield](#) dismissed criticism of Vigilant Storm as “propaganda” from North Korea and claimed that it presented no threat to other nations.

During the emergency meeting, she attacked China and Russia, saying they had “aided” North Korea.

The escalation has been attributed to Washington by both Moscow and Beijing, and the meeting came to a conclusion without the Security Council issuing a [joint statement](#).

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